XIII. *An Account of the sinking of the Dutch Frigate* Ambuscade, *of 32 Guns, near the Great Nore; with the Mode used in recovering her. By Mr.* Joseph Whidbey, *Master Attendant in Sheerness Dock Yard. Communicated by the Right Hon. Sir* Joseph Banks, *Bart. K. B. P. R. S.*

Read April 28, 1803.

At eight o'clock in the morning of the 9th day of July, 1801, the Dutch frigate Ambuscade left the moorings in Sheerness harbour, her fore-sail, top-sails, and top-gallant-sails being set, with the wind aft, blowing strong. In about thirty minutes, she went down by the head, near the Great Nore; not giving the crew time to take in the sails, nor the pilot or officers more than four minutes notice, before she sunk; by which unfortunate event, twenty-two of the crew were drowned.

This extraordinary accident was owing to the hawse-holes being extremely large and low, the hawse-plugs not being in, and the holes being pressed under water by a crowd of sail on the ship, through which a sufficient body of water got in, unperceived, to carry her to the bottom.

The instant she sunk, she rolled over to windward across the tide, and lay on her beam ends; so that, at low water, the muzzles of the main deck guns were a little out of the water, and pointed to the zenith, with 32 feet of water round her.

The first point I had to gain, was to get her upright. Before

I could accomplish it, I was obliged to cut away her fore-mast, and main-top-mast; which had no effect, until the mizen-mast was also cut away; she then instantly lifted her side, so that, at low water, the lee railing on the quarter deck was visible.

By proceeding in this manner, the first part of my object was obtained, with a secured main-mast, and all its rigging, to enable me, should I be fortunate enough to weigh the ship, to lighten her by it with the greatest possible expedition.

The ship being in the forementioned state, gave me an opportunity, the next low water, to get out her quarter, forecastle, and some of her main-deck guns, with a variety of other articles.

I next proceeded to sling her; which was done with two nineteen-inch cables, divided into eight equal parts. The larboard side of the ship being so much higher than the starboard, enabled me to clench each of the ends round two of the ports, excepting one that was clenched round the main-mast; and, with great difficulty, by long rods and diving, I got small lines rove through four of the ports on the starboard side, by which means, I got four of the cables through those ports across her deck, which were clenched to the main-mast and larboard side, having four ends on each side completely fast, at equal distances from each other. I brought the Broederscarp, of 1063 tons burthen, out of the harbour, which received the four ends on the starboard side; also four lighters, of 100 tons each, which took in the other four ends, on the larboard side, over their bows. All the eight ends were at low water hove down with great power, by a purchase lashed distinctly on each of them. I then laid down two 13-inch cables, spliced together, with an anchor of

24 *cwt.* in a direction with the ship's keel. On the end of the cable next the frigate a block was lashed, through which was rove a 9-inch hawser, one end of which was made fast to the ship; the other end was brought to a capstan on board the Broederscarp, and hove on it as much as it would bear, with an intention to relieve the frigate from the powerful effect of cohesion. This had so far the desired effect that, at about half flood, I perceived the ship to draw an end, and swing to the tide; and all the slings were considerably relieved. At high water, she was completely out of her bed. At the next low water, I hove all the purchases down again. At half flood she floated; and the whole group drove together into the harbour, a distance of three miles, and grounded the frigate on the west side of it. It took me two tides more to lift her on the shore, sufficiently high to pump her out; which was then done with ease, and the ship completely recovered, without the smallest damage whatever, either to her bottom or her sides.

I do not apprehend there is any thing new in the mode I adopted in weighing the Ambuscade, excepting the idea of removing the effect of cohesion, by the process before described; and I have every reason to think, that if that principle had been acted on, in the attempt made to weigh the Royal George, it would have succeeded.

I am, &c.

EXPLANATION OF THE FIGURES.

Plate V. Represents the Ambuscade Dutch frigate, as weighed from the east end of the Middle Sand, near the Great Nore, on the 17th of July, 1801.

Fig. 1. Broederscarp Dutch hulk.

Fig. 2. Chain lighter.

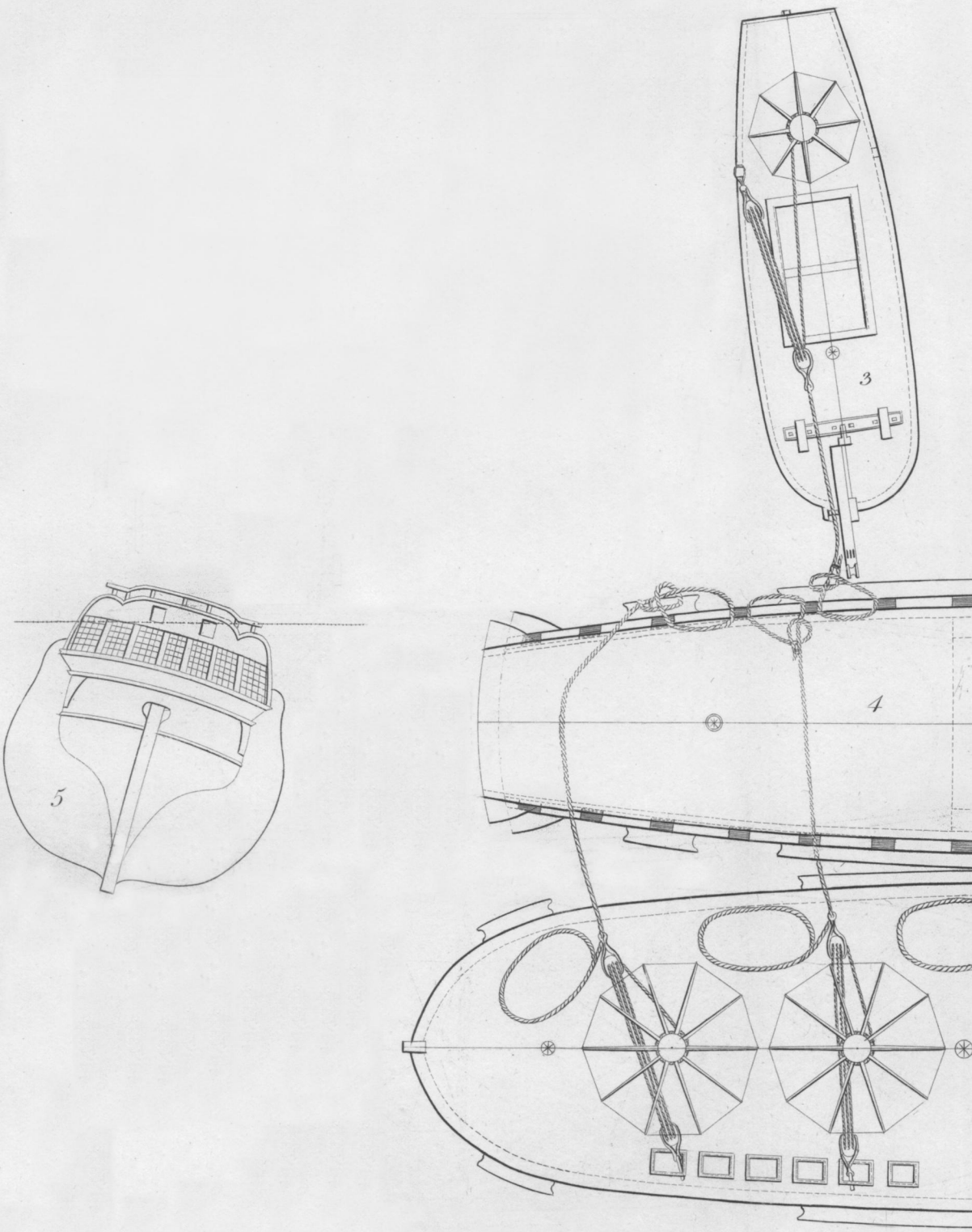
Fig. 3. Goodwill, Medway, and Sheerness, sailing lighters.

Fig. 4. The frigate Ambuscade.

Fig. 5. Section of ditto, showing her position, with the height of water, as marked by the dotted line, at low water; the tide rising sixteen feet.

Fig. 6. Cohesion cable, of 13 inches; 200 fathoms in length.

Fig. 7. Anchor of 24 *cwt.*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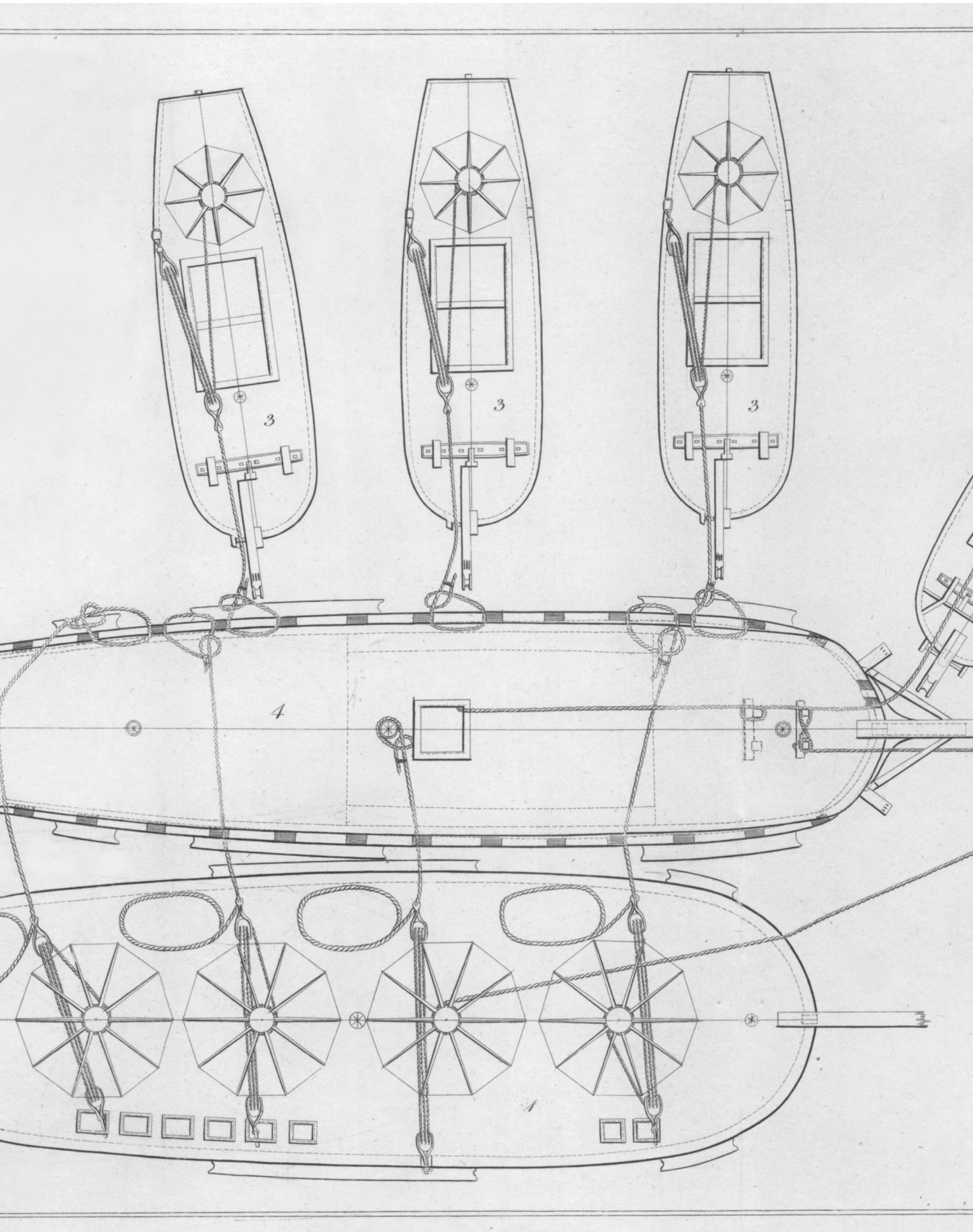
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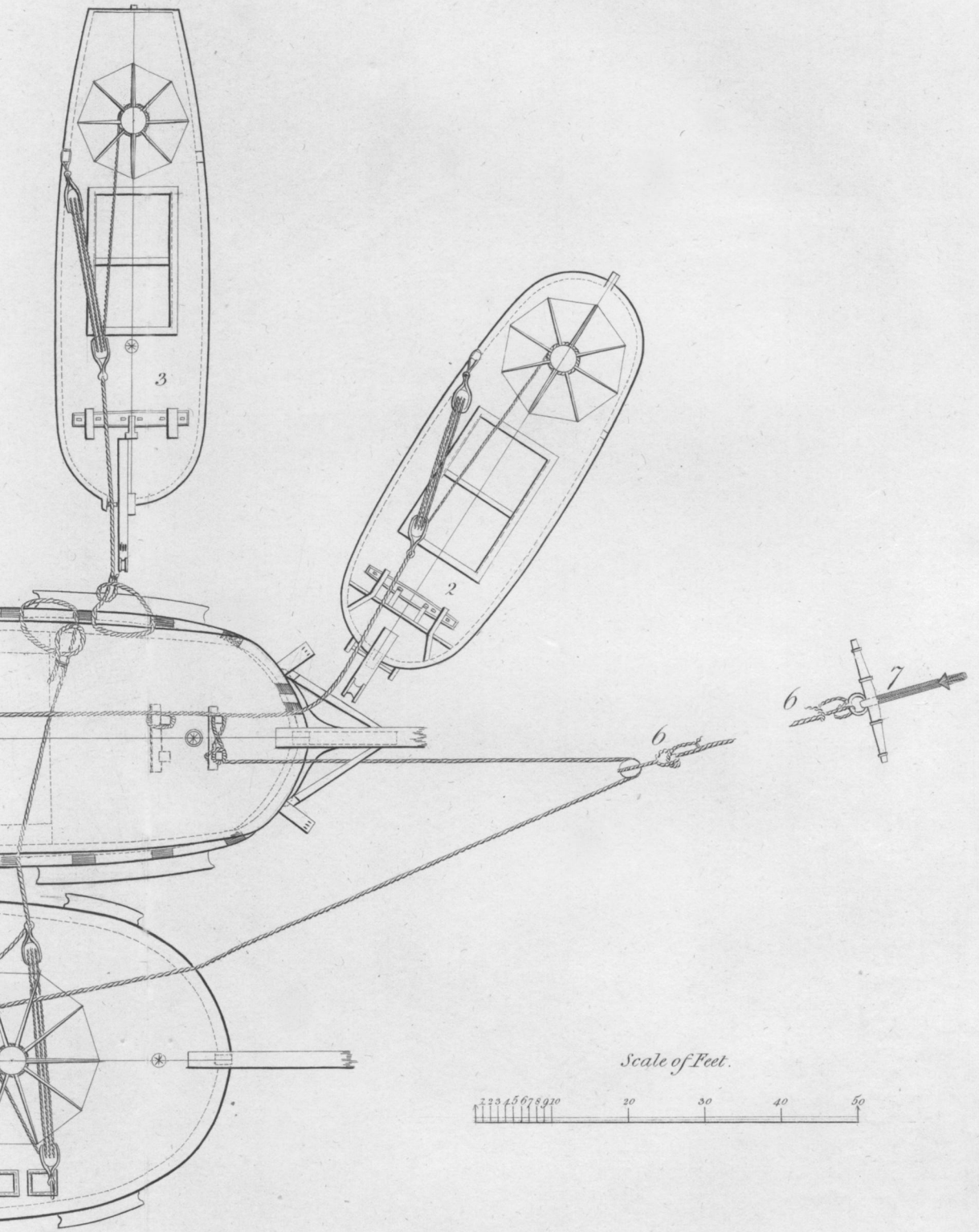

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